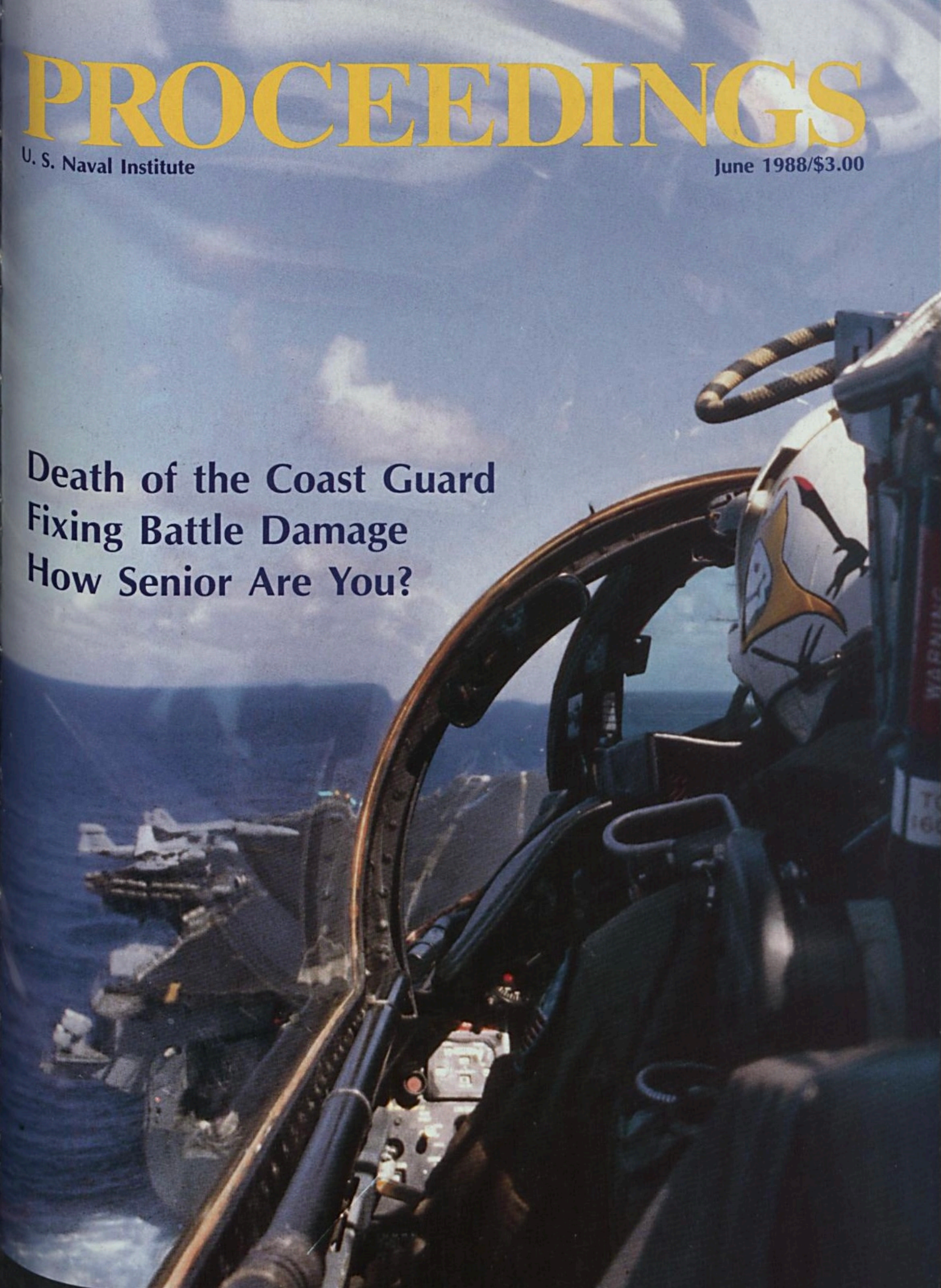


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Merchants of Treason

Thomas B. Allen and Norman Polmar. New York: Delacorte, 1988. 378 pp. Photos. Maps. Charts. Tables. Append. Bib. Ind. \$19.95.

Reviewed by James Bamford

About six years ago, officials in the U. S. intelligence and counterintelligence communities were shocked and outraged to learn that an employee of Britain's top secret eavesdropping and codebreaking agency, GCHQ, had been selling secrets—some of them American—to the Soviet Union for many years. Knowing such a thing could never happen in the

tion collaboration since *Rickover: Controversy and Genius* (Simon and Schuster, 1982), Allen and Polmar begin their tour d'horizon of U. S. security failures with, appropriately, the capture of the USS *Pueblo* (AGER-2). Loaded with cryptographic equipment, too many secret documents, and virtually no destruct capability, the former spy ship sits today, probably in North Korea's Wonsan Harbor, as a floating monument to poor planning and blinded foresight. To show that some things never change, the authors also discuss the tragic and ill-fated Iran hostage rescue mission.

Espionage has become a hot topic for

began with the arrest of John Walker and that it was limited to the half-dozen cases that have attracted enormous attention in the past few years. Few people realize that these cases are simply the most spectacular of dozens that have occurred over the last decade, and that little of substance has been done to prevent future disasters. One would think, for example, that following the arrest of former Navy Senior Chief Jerry Whitworth and the Walker family, with all the criticism and horror stories of possible damage that followed, that not even a mouse could get out of secure Navy spaces with so much as a piece of confetti from the shredder. Yet Jonathan Pollard managed to walk through the door of the Naval Intelligence Command with a Guinness Book-world record number of highly secret documents—somewhere in the neighborhood of 815,000 pages worth! Nobody, at least as far as I could discover, was ever fired or court-martialed for that enormous security breach. Therein lies one of the many problems.

Had a captain allowed his destroyer to run aground, the consequences would likely have been greater than those levied against the people who should have detected Pollard's activities. Along these lines, Allen and Polmar have included recommendations to help avoid some of these problems in the future. They also have included a remarkably complete list, with brief summaries, of more than 50 of the known espionage- or intelligence-related cases since 1953, when cash replaced conscience as the motivating factor. Another appendix lists the Soviet and other foreign agents who have engaged in espionage in the United States.

Were an actuary ever to study the counterintelligence problem—looking at the numbers of cases in the past, how accident or luck has brought most to light, how long the perpetrators have gone on without being detected, and how the trend is growing—he would probably tell us that at this moment chances are good that several dozen or more federal employees are secretly moonlighting for the Soviets. U. S. intelligence agencies must make serious changes before this moonlighting develops into a cottage industry. *Merchants of Treason* packages some worthwhile recommended actions in an excellent and highly readable book.

James Bamford is the author of *The Puzzle Palace* (Houghton Mifflin, 1982), a study of the National Security Agency, and writes frequently on intelligence issues. He wrote an article on the Walker spy case for the "Naval Review" issue of *Proceedings* in May 1986.



SYGMA

How many Arthur Walkers is the U. S. Government employing today?

United States, many of these officials, with a moral self-righteousness approaching that of a television evangelist, began urging that the government cut the leaky British off from all but the most essential U. S. secrets.

At the same time, however, primarily through utter incompetence, the U. S. Navy and parts of the intelligence community had enough people in their ranks selling secrets to the Russians to start a baseball team. In 1985 the lid popped off and we had "The Year of the Spy," but the general public received only a glimpse—through several sensational cases—of the complex problem.

Merchants of Treason by Thomas B. Allen, who recently completed a book on war games, and Norman Polmar, a noted naval authority, is the first book to take a comprehensive look at how disastrous U. S. counterintelligence has been for the last several decades. In their first nonfic-

authors recently. Thus far there have been three books on the Walker family spy case alone, and one more is due out this summer. None, however, offers even the slightest insight into the magnitude of the counterintelligence problem facing this country. One of the books was mostly newspaper clippings pasted together, another looked at the case through the eyes of the Walker family, and a third supplied the perspective of the investigators and prosecutors. Other books are due out on Jonathan Pollard, the Navy counterintelligence analyst who passed a mountain of secrets to Israel, and Edward Howard, a former CIA employee who sold information to the Soviet Union.

Although *Merchants of Treason* also takes a close look at these cases—and frequently provides new information—the book's true value is that it puts them in a larger context. The impression of most Americans is that the problem